

Title

Start Unconditional Basic Income

Subject matter

We request the EU Commission to recommend and support all Member States in introducing an Unconditional Basic Income that ensures every person's material existence and possibility for participation in society.

Objectives

The introduction of UBI at a level above the national at-risk-of-poverty threshold and linked to a reference basket of goods and services shall achieve the aims of the EU to combat poverty, racism, social exclusion and discrimination, to promote life in dignity and freedom, gender equality, social justice and protection, solidarity-oriented society and individual time sovereignty. UBI shall promote democracy and the socio-ecological transformation of society and economy.

ANNEX

Initiators of the ECI

The persons presenting the proposal for our ECI are citizens out of 27 EU Member States, different in their cultures, languages, social interests and political and religious / philosophical background, but sharing the common view presented here.

Definition of Unconditional Basic Income

Unconditional Basic Income (UBI) shall not replace the welfare state but rather complete and transform the same from a compensatory into an emancipatory welfare state.

Emancipatory Unconditional Basic Income is defined by the following four criteria: **universal, individual, unconditional, high enough to ensure an existence in dignity and participation in society.**

Universal: UBI is paid to all, without means test. It is not subject to income, savings or property limits. Every person, irrespective of age, descent, citizenship, place of residence, profession etc. will be entitled to receive this allocation. Thus, we claim a European-wide, guaranteed, unconditional basic income.

Individual: Everyone – every woman, every man, every child – has the right to UBI on an individual basis as this is the only way to ensure privacy and to prevent control over other individuals. UBI will be independent of marital status, cohabitation or household configuration, or of the income or property of other household - or family members. This enables individuals to make their own decisions.

Unconditional: As a human and legal right UBI shall not depend on any preconditions, whether an obligation to take paid employment, to demonstrate willingness-to-work, to be involved in community service, or to behave according to any gender roles.

High enough: The amount should provide for a decent standard of living, which meets society's social and cultural standards in the country concerned. It should prevent material poverty and provide the opportunity to participate in society. This means that the net amount of UBI should be above the at-risk-of-poverty level according to EU standards, which corresponds to 60% of the so-called national median net equivalent income. Especially in countries where the majority has low incomes, and therefore median income is low, an alternative benchmark (e.g. a basket of goods) should be used to determine the amount of the basic income, to guarantee a life in dignity, material security and full participation in society.

We see further criteria that make basic income an emancipatory measure:

a) UBI should be a tool to redistribute from the upper to the lower classes, especially with the help of the taxation of capital, wealth, and high incomes.

b) There are certain groups of persons with additional or special needs who should therefore be eligible for special support, in addition to UBI – such as for example, single parents, pregnant women, handicapped people with chronic illnesses, and people with high housing costs.

c) UBI is embedded in the extension, improvement, and democratization of existing social security systems.

d) UBI goes along with the maintenance, extension, and democratization of public infrastructures.

e) UBI stands in the context of the perspective of gender equality that realizes a radical redistribution of socially necessary labour (paid and unpaid) between genders. Further measures for realizing gender equality are necessary.

f) UBI is linked to concepts and societal developments towards ecological sustainability.

g) UBI is situated in a perspective for the creation of a solidarity-oriented, participatory, and co-operative society that is based on the democratization of economy and society.

h) The demand for UBI is coupled with further demands that concern employment laws, especially with the radical reduction in working hours (with neither pay nor staffing-levels reduced) and with minimum wages.

i) UBI releases from precarity and stress, it improves health and helps avoid depression, burn out and cardiovascular diseases and, thus, reduces the costs of the health system.

Justifications for Unconditional Basic Income

Rise of poverty and lack of access to income

The European-wide basic income coalition Unconditional Basic Income Europe (UBIE) is particularly concerned with the risk of poverty and social exclusion levels in the Eurozone amounting to a quarter of its population, and their rise partly as a result of the euro crisis. The most pressing issues are:

- 1) the precarity of young people;
- 2) child- and old-age poverty;
- 3) in-work poverty.

More generally, UBIE is concerned with growing poverty and the increase in the risk of poverty for the overall population, the decline in household disposable income and the increase in the number of the working poor. In particular, the current prospects for the EU 2020 poverty target, which aims to lift 20 million people out of poverty by 2020, look rather dim while increasing numbers of people in the EU face a lack of access to basic goods and services like housing, food and clothes.

Unemployment levels

Although the situation in terms of unemployment seems to slowly stabilise, in 2014 it still

amounted to 8 million people more than at the beginning of the crisis in 2008. In the euro area, unemployment remains high and particularly affects young people. More than one fifth of economically active young people in the EU are unemployed and their prospects remain not encouraging. The proportion of young people who are neither in employment, education nor in training has increased substantially over recent years.

Disparities across Member States

The introduction of the euro has produced increasing economic divergence between deficit and surplus countries. Important differences in terms of GDP per capita, labour productivity or unemployment levels (among others) are typically very different between the north and the south of the euro area. Moreover, the important social imbalances in terms of public investment in education, healthcare, or social security threaten the monetary union as much as economic imbalances.

An UBI for all people would be a strong signal that the EU takes the right to “a decent existence” seriously.

As a result of current employment patterns and inadequate income maintenance systems (conditional, means-tested, not high enough, not strictly individual), we regard the introduction of UBI as essential for guaranteeing fundamental rights, especially a life in dignity, as set forth in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

Above all, UBI will help to prevent poverty and grant freedom to each individual, to determine his or her own life, and strengthen the participation of all in society.

UBI will help to avoid social divisions, debates based on envy and abuse and their consequences, as well as superfluous costly, repressive and exclusive controls and inspections by the bureaucracy. As a transfer payment free of discrimination and stigmatization, UBI prevents hidden poverty and different types of illness.

UBI brings about social freedom, helps citizens to identify with the European Union and

ensures their political rights. It supports the realisation of fundamental rights. “The dignity of the human person is not only a fundamental right in itself but constitutes the real basis of fundamental rights.” (official explanation on article 1 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union).

The introduction of UBI and possible steps towards its introduction are within the respective areas of responsibility of the Member States of the European Union. There exist many studies showing different ways of financing UBI. We do not suggest any specific one in this ECI.

UBIE argues that there is scope for further EU action in the field of minimum income protection and of ensuring the decent life for all if the EU acts as a complementary welfare layer which supports and complements the activities of its Member States. Different forms of overcoming the social disparities across Member States are discussed, for example the introduction of a European public health, public pension and unemployed insurance, a Eurodividend to all EU citizens and a basic income for all children or pensioners in EU – in order to reduce poverty and income inequalities, and redress excessive economic and social imbalances.

The Eurodividend, defined as a strictly individual, guaranteed, unconditional (without means test, work requirement or service in return) and complementary (non-replacing) income for all people, would be an effective mechanism to support national welfare models by enforcing social rights in a non-intrusive fashion, leaving room for national arrangements of social solidarity according to historical, cultural and political traditions.

ATTACHMENTS

Treaty on European Union (TEU)

“Consolidated versions of the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on Functioning of the European Union” 2010/C83/01 (30th March 2010)

Article 2

The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail.

Reasons for Unconditional Basic Income:

UBI as defined by its four criteria realizes all of the values listed above. It provides material security and full participation in society without conditions – combined with equality of all individuals.

Article 3

3. The Union shall establish an internal market. It shall work for the sustainable development of Europe based on balanced economic growth and price stability, a highly competitive social market economy, aiming at full employment and social progress, and a high level of protection and improvement of the quality of the environment. It shall promote scientific and technological advance.

It shall combat social exclusion and discrimination, and shall promote social justice and protection, equality between women and men, solidarity between generations and protection of the rights of the child.

It shall promote economic, social and territorial cohesion, and solidarity among Member States.

It shall respect its rich cultural and linguistic diversity, and shall ensure that Europe's cultural heritage is safeguarded and enhanced.

Reasons for Unconditional Basic Income:

UBI supports the reduction and redistribution of working hours and will, therefore, facilitate new forms of full employment. UBI combats social exclusion and discrimination inherent in the current income maintenance systems. UBI promotes to achieve the EU's goals such as those to attain full employment, combat social exclusion and discrimination and support social justice and social protection (Art. 3 Para 3 TEU).

In addition, UBI promotes the rights of children as well as solidarity between generations and between Member States. Therefore, we take the initiative and ask the EU-Commission to be active within the framework of its authorization in the area of social policy (Art. 151 ff TFEU) in accordance with Article 156 preserving the rights of the Member States.

Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU)

“Consolidated versions of the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on Functioning of the European Union” 2010/C83/01 (30th March 2010)

Article 5

(3) The Union may take initiatives to ensure coordination of Member States' social policies.

Reasons for Unconditional Basic Income:

Social policies of the Member States can be coordinated in order to combat social dumping. The common measure for all would be the introduction of UBI to the four defined criteria. The responsibility for adapting the existing national social system to UBI lies within the Member States.

Article 156

With a view to achieving the objectives of Article 151 and without prejudice to the other provisions of the Treaties, the Commission shall encourage cooperation between the Member States and facilitate the coordination of their action in all social policy fields under this Chapter, particularly in matters relating to:

- employment,
- labour law and working conditions,
- basic and advanced vocational training,
- social security,
- prevention of occupational accidents and diseases,
- occupational hygiene,
- the right of association and collective bargaining between employers and workers.

To this end, the Commission shall act in close contact with Member States by making studies, delivering opinions and arranging consultations both on problems arising at national level and on those of concern to international organisations, in particular initiatives aiming at the establishment of guidelines and indicators, the organisation of exchange of best practice, and the preparation of the necessary elements for periodic monitoring and evaluation. The European Parliament shall be kept fully informed.

Before delivering the opinions provided for in this Article, the Commission shall consult the Economic and Social Committee.

Reasons for Unconditional Basic Income:

According to Article 156, the EU-Commission can encourage cooperation between the Member States by using UBI as a tool to improve their social security systems.

Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union

“Consolidated versions of the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on Functioning of the European Union” 2010/C83/01 (30th March 2010)

Article 1

Human dignity

Human dignity is inviolable.

It must be respected and protected.

Reasons for Unconditional Basic Income:

The dignity of the individual must include the opportunity of living freely and responsibly within society. UBI grants freedom to each individual and a life in responsibility by removing existential and administrative constraints as well as exclusion from social life.

Article 2

Right to life (1)

Everyone has the right to life.

Reasons for Unconditional Basic Income:

This human right to life is undisputed. Within our present economic system, life depends on obtaining the material means of existence by using money. Of course, one could also

introduce a voucher system. However, the users of such vouchers would be discriminated compared with individuals who are free to decide how to use their finances from different sources of income. The legal right to an UBI transfer payment ensures a dignified life with the opportunity to participate in society, and it also fulfills the right to a life in justice, free from discrimination.

Article 5

Prohibition of slavery and forced labour

(2) No one shall be required to perform forced or compulsory labour.

Reasons for Unconditional Basic Income:

According to the International Labour Organisation, forced or compulsory labour “means all work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily.” (IAO, Forced Labour Convention, 1930, No. 29). In many current minimum income schemes and supplementary benefit systems, benefits can be withdrawn under certain conditions. UBI abolishes such cuts that force beneficiaries of conditional welfare (workfare) to take up work under conditions which they would have rejected otherwise.

Article 6

Right to liberty and security

Everyone has the right to liberty and security of person.

Reasons for Unconditional Basic Income:

UBI supports the free choice of personal life-style, the arrangement of one’s social relations and whether to engage in social and economic cooperation. With this freedom responsibility in solidarity should arise. In addition to the protection provided by the current social insurance systems and social services, UBI is the best guarantee of

financial security during times of illness and unemployment.

Article 15

Freedom to choose an occupation and right to engage in work

1. Everyone has the right to engage in work and to pursue a freely chosen or accepted occupation.

Reasons for Unconditional Basic Income:

UBI makes it easier to practise a freely chosen, or at least acceptable, occupation. Under many current income maintenance systems, the need for material goods and services in order to survive, together with various administrative constraints, restricts one's freedom of choice of occupation and forces one to accept unsuitable paid work.

Article 21

Non-discrimination

1. Any discrimination based on any ground such as sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation shall be prohibited.

2. Within the scope of application of the Treaties and without prejudice to any of their specific provisions, any discrimination on grounds of nationality shall be prohibited.

Reasons for Unconditional Basic Income:

UBI avoids discrimination and promotes autonomy by providing material and financial security for every person.

Article 34

Social security and social assistance

(1) The Union recognises and respects the entitlement to social security benefits and social services providing protection in cases such as maternity, illness, industrial accidents, dependency or old age, and in the case of loss of employment, in accordance with the rules laid down by Union law and national laws and practices.

(2) Everyone residing and moving legally within the European Union is entitled to social security benefits and social advantages in accordance with Union law and national laws and practices.

(3) In order to combat social exclusion and poverty, the Union recognises and respects the right to social and housing assistance so as to ensure a decent existence for all those who lack sufficient resources, in accordance with the rules laid down by Union law and national laws and practices.

Reasons for Unconditional Basic Income:

An UBI is the best method of fulfilling the fundamental right to financial security and social support, in addition to each country's respective social insurances and social services. Everybody will receive it and therefore no one will be excluded or discriminated against. This contrasts with the stigmatizing character of many current income maintenance schemes, which discourage many potential applicants with legal entitlement from taking up their benefits, and this low take-up increases social exclusion.